United Nations A/54/129 – E/1999/73

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 June 1999

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Item 20 (b) of the preliminary list*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 5 of the provisional agenda**
Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Progress made in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis

A. Background

1. Hurricane Georges struck the eastern Caribbean (islands of Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis) on 20 and 21 September 1998. Saint Kitts was the most damaged and, according to news reports, the extent of damage throughout the region is such that it will probably take years before life returns to normal. On 23 September, all four island States sent disaster assistance requests to a variety of international and intra-Caribbean organizations. In the eastern Caribbean, damages were assessed as follows.

Antigua and Barbuda

2. In Antigua, two deaths were reported and 15 people were seriously injured as a direct result of hurricane Georges. In addition, approximately 1,650 homes were damaged, 1,500 of them sustaining partial or complete loss of roofing; another 150 poorly constructed homes were completely destroyed. The towns along the southern coast were the most severely affected. For almost three weeks, electricity was not fully operational and a number of phone lines are still not functional.

3. According to the local government in Barbuda, 3,338 people were rendered homeless on the two islands, 1,762 homes were damaged and 390 destroyed. As in other affected countries, the storm curtailed the supply of electricity and phone service and hampered the distribution

* A/54/50.
** E/1999/100 and Add.1.

99-17348 (E) 290699

of water. The towns along the southern Antiguan coastline were devastated. Fire Island, All Saints, Liberta, Bolan and Crab Hill were declared disaster areas as a result of extensive damage in the low and middle-income neighbourhoods. The hospital and airport on both islands were severely damaged, as were many businesses in Antigua and one school and two hotels in Barbuda.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

4. In Saint Kitts, there were four confirmed deaths. According to a damage assessment conducted by the National Emergency Management Agency, hurricane Georges caused approximately US$ 402 million worth of damage. Electricity and phone lines were completely disrupted and water facilities damaged. Eighty-five per cent of private homes were damaged to a varied extent and 20 to 25 per cent of homes were totally destroyed, temporarily displacing 2,500 people. Roofs were blown off many schools and public buildings, including the main hospital and businesses. The airport's main terminal and control tower were also damaged. In the agricultural sector, it is suspected that 50 per cent of the 1999 sugar harvest was lost. Many major hotels were severely damaged, possibly affecting the tourist industry for a long time to come.

5. The northern and eastern areas of the island were the most damaged, but the southern tip (a major tourist site) is in need of repair. The tourist industry in Saint Kitts was also affected by the destruction of the main pier and berthing platform in Bassterre and by damage to several major hotels. Because Saint Kitts relies on its tourist industry for much of its national income, the economic effects of the hurricane will be more significant over the longer term. The loss of 50 per cent of the 1999 sugar harvest will also negatively impact on the island's economy.

6. In Nevis, the National Disaster Coordinator reported injuries but no deaths. Electricity and phone service were curtailed and 35 per cent of all homes damaged. Crops, mainly coconut trees, were seriously damaged. The coordinator also indicated US$ 1 million worth of damage to the electrical system and US$ 2.5 million worth of damage to the agricultural sector. Damage to the housing sector was less severe, although several schools and hotels were damaged and many beaches are eroded.

B. Response of the United Nations system to hurricane Georges emergency and rehabilitation phases[1]

7. Together with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the in-country United Nations disaster management team (in-country representatives of United Nations agencies), the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs activated their tools for coordination of international response. These are: (a) issuance of situation reports highlighting unmet emergency requirements in order to mobilize international assistance and summing up international response; (b) provision of a channel for cash contributions (US$ 100,000) for relief and immediate rehabilitation.

8. In addition, since the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (BHR/OFDA) had pre-positioned personnel in Barbados prior to the hurricane's fury, the latter was in a position to immediately deploy two three-person assessment teams to the eastern Caribbean. One team arrived in Saint Kitts and Nevis on 22 September and the other arrived in Antigua and Barbuda on 23 September. Equipment, such as plastic sheeting, water bladders and 1,903 five-gallon water jugs, were delivered to Antigua for distribution to the other islands. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) contributed approximately US$ 150,000 to the effort.

9. In order to strengthen national capacities in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and PAHO/World Health Organization (WHO) have designed and launched longer-term capacity-building programmes. The PAHO initiative focuses mainly on the health sector and UNDP assistance aims at (a) strengthening the institutional and organizational capacities of each of the civil protection agencies; (b) supporting the preparation of a national disaster management plan; and (c) providing planning and technical assistance to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) located in Barbados. In addition, UNDP provided personnel for the assessment carried out by CDERA; $100,000 for emergency response coordination for Saint Kitts and Nevis and $50,000 for emergency response coordination through CDERA for Antigua and Barbuda. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided personnel for assessment and food for two weeks for Saint Kitts and Nevis. A total of US$ 50,000 had

already been channelled through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in late 1997 for hurricane preparedness measures to be undertaken in Saint Kitts and Nevis for the following season.

C. Progress in the rehabilitation/ reconstruction phase

10. The majority of donors, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA) and the European Union, have redirected a good portion of their assistance programmes to satisfy some of the requirements in the rehabilitation/reconstruction costs, especially for the rural infrastructures (roads and irrigation) road maintenance and repairs, and in the building of a food security safety net.

11. CDERA has compiled a list of needs and has prepared an appeal, which is being circulated among donors for funding.

II. Dominican Republic

A. Introduction

12. Hurricane Georges entered the Dominican Republic in the early morning hours of Tuesday, 22 September 1998, and continued its path through the entire country before entering neighbouring Haiti at approximately 2 a.m. on 23 September. The hurricane, whose strength reached speeds estimated at 175 kilometres per hour, left in its wake 300 deaths, thousands homeless and considerable material damages to the country. Although the majority of the country's 7.5 million inhabitants were directly or indirectly affected, the hurricane dealt an even more severe blow to those already living in poor conditions. The economic damages were estimated at US$ 2.2 billion (equivalent to 14 per cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP), or about half of the country's export value for 1997).[2]

13. A significant part of the vegetation in the country suffered major damage and, most significantly, agricultural output registered major losses of yields of basic foodstuff such as rice, banana and cassava. In terms of loss in infrastructure, a significant portion of the country's telecommunications system, as well as the distribution of electricity and water, was heavily affected. Many bridges were destroyed or heavily damaged. Following the initial impact of the hurricane, the Government of the Dominican Republic proceeded to swiftly set in motion various emergency programmes, most of which were supported by the international donor community. The national authorities favoured an integrated and sustainable rehabilitation process, in consultation with national and international development institutions.

14. Together with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the in-country United Nations disaster management team, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs activated their tools for coordination of international response, namely: (a) issuance of situation reports highlighting unmet emergency requirements in order to mobilize international assistance and summing up international response; (b) deployment of a United Nations disaster assessment and coordination team to assist the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator; (c) provision of a channel for cash contributions (US$ 142,000) for relief and immediate rehabilitation; and (d) facilitation of a shipment of water-supply equipment.

15. The response of the international community, including the United Nations system, was massive and immediate. In the months that followed, in an effort to mitigate the urgent needs of the hundreds of thousands directly affected by the hurricane, several coordinating meetings were held in the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator with government officials and national and international institutions.

B. The United Nations system: programme objective, implementing institutions and time-frame

16. The overall objective of the UNDP/United Nations Emergency/Rehabilitation Programme was to support the Government of the Dominican Republic in the implementation of a successful transition process from the initial emergency situation to an integrated and sustainable development programme benefiting the most vulnerable groups affected by the hurricane. The UNDP/United Nations Programme is being implemented through the National Planning Office of the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency (ONAPLAN) and supported directly by the UNDP office and two UNDP projects, namely DOM/97/009 (now DOM/99/001), entitled "Sustainable Human Development" and DOM/96/010 (now DOM/99/003), entitled "Housing and Human Settlements". The Programme is scheduled for completion in July 1999, but it is hoped that

additional contributions will allow for intensification and/or extension of programme activities.

C. Activities and beneficiaries: emergency relief and rehabilitation

17. Programme activities initially focused on direct emergency relief to refugees and on the provision of equipment to the central governmental institutions, with a view to improving their capacity for coordinating and implementing the emergency phase. Programme activities have been subsequently directed towards the rehabilitation process, emergency preparedness, housing reconstruction and access to safe water for a total of 110,000 beneficiaries. In order to support an integrated development process, special attention has been given to training and income-generation-related activities, with special emphasis on improving the situation of women.

Seminars and missions

18. In October 1998, a comprehensive, multisectoral, socio-economic evaluation of the damages caused by hurricane Georges in the Dominican Republic was prepared by a multidisciplinary mission of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). In February 1999, a national seminar was organized and co-financed by the UNDP/United Nations Programme, in order to prepare an integrated national evaluation report on hurricane Georges. The final report was released at the beginning of March 1999, within the framework of the regional seminar (co-sponsored by PAHO/WHO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction) on Disaster and preparedness and mitigation in the Americas, held in Santo Domingo from 16 to 19 February 1999. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UNDP Emergency Response Division and UNDP in New York actively participated in the meeting and organized a joint inter-agency monitoring visit to the Programme site (see http://www.pnud.org.do for a detailed view of the missions' activities).

Additional assistance provided by the international community

19. Bilateral and other multilateral emergency assistance during the emergency and in the months that followed has been consistent with the urgent needs of those most affected by the hurricane. The Government of the United States of America, through its various branches, provided significant relief, namely, through the provision of grants totalling US$ 29 million to be used in reconstruction and emergency preparedness, as well as US$ 180,000 in wood materials for housing reconstruction. Most significantly, it intervened vis-à-vis the Paris Club regarding the postponement of US$ 100 million due for repayment in the year 2000. The World Bank approved a US$ 111 million loan for emergency preparedness and rehabilitation and France, Italy, Japan and Spain also contributed, to varying degrees, with financial and in-kind contributions, as did most of the Latin American Governments.

The experience thus far

20. The Government's Emergency Programme has thus far shown remarkable progress. Access to electricity and to safe water was reinstated to previous levels, within a month of the hurricane. As of April 1999, an additional 91,000 new housing units will be constructed through a joint venture recently established between the Government-owned Housing Bank and national private sector investors.

21. As regards the United Nations Emergen and Reconstruction Programme, it continues to enjoy a high degree of participation and co-financing (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UNDP Emergency Response Division, Norway, Luxembourg and the Holy See), as well as a remarkably strong community support to its project activities. Moreover, the special combination of inputs, namely, technical assistance and emergency supplies on the one hand, and materials for construction and water equipment on the other (benefiting approximately 110,000 people), has made possible the implementation of an integrated emergency and rehabilitation programme the overall objective of which is to facilitate a smooth and sustainable transition from emergency to development, through effective and direct involvement of the beneficiaries themselves. The United Nations Programme has, likewise, strengthened sustainability by allowing for efficient training in disaster preparedness vis-à-vis some of the most vulnerable population groups. In the case of the United Nations-organized housing construction and reconstruction in Sabana Perdita and at the Bateyes, new and better techniques are being implemented to make housing more resistant to natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods.

22. In the coming months, and before the arrival of the forthcoming hurricane season (June), the Government, with assistance from the United Nations and other multilateral

organizations, in particular the World Bank, will give special attention to preparedness activities both at the central and community levels, with a view to focusing on how best to manage and mitigate future disaster situations.

III. Haiti

A. Background

23. Hurricane Georges entered Haiti on the night of 22 September 1998, having weakened when crossing the central mountain range in the Dominican Republic. It followed a south-east to north-westerly direction, which placed the eye of the storm over the Center, Artibonite and North-west departments. Some localized severe damage occurred outside the direct eye of the storm. High population density, subsistence living standards, widespread soil erosion and the lack of disaster management magnified the hurricane's impact.

24. According to government figures, 242 people died, 42 were missing and 124 injured. The Government also estimated that about 385,000 people had been affected, 4,500 houses destroyed and 16,000 damaged.

B. Response of the United Nations system to the hurricane Georges emergency and rehabilitation phases

25. Together with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the in-country United Nations disaster management team, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs activated the following tools for coordination of international response: (a) issuance of situation reports highlighting unmet emergency requirements in order to mobilize international assistance and summing up international response; (b) deployment of a United Nations disaster assessment and coordination team to assist the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator; and (c) provision of a channel for cash contributions (US$ 40,000) for relief and immediate rehabilitation.

26. Building upon an already existing coordination mechanism, the Resident Coordinator's office played an important coordination role during the emergency and rehabilitation phases. This mechanism is the main forum on disaster management where representatives from government institutions, donor organizations, United Nations agencies and local/international non-governmental organizations meet regularly in Haiti.

27. In order to strengthen national capacities in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management, the aftermath of hurricane Georges, UNDP and PAHO/WHO have designed and launched longer-term capacity-building programmes. While the PAHO/WHO initiative focuses mainly on human resources development, the UNDP project aims at (a) strengthening the institutional and organizational capacities of the Directorate of Civil Protection; and (b) supporting the preparation of a national disaster management plan. These initiatives are closely coordinated with a parallel European Union/European Community Humanitarian Office-sponsored capacity-building project.

World Bank hurricane Georges recovery report

28. The World Bank commissioned an evaluation shortly after the hurricane. The main findings of the mission's report (hurricane Georges recovery report), issued in November 1998 were the following:

(a) The estimates of the direct damages from hurricane Georges range from about US$ 80 to over US$ 180 million. Based on preliminary data from FAO and government sources, the lower estimate appears to be the most likely figure. However, total losses, including indirect and secondary losses, could more than double the US$ 80 million in direct losses. In comparison with GDP, the losses are significant. Direct losses amount to nearly 3 per cent of the total GDP and total losses (direct, indirect secondary) could be double that amount;

(b) The private sector suffered over 80 per cent of the direct losses, mainly in agriculture and housing. Agriculture crop and livestock losses alone were estimated at US$ 53 million. Public losses in infrastructure, including, *inter alia*, agricultural roads (US$ 2 million), irrigation (US$ 2 million) and transport (US$ 8 million), were estimated to amount to about US$ 15 million;

(c) The damages were located mainly in the areas of Sud-Est and Bas-Artibonite, particularly in areas near rivers where extensive flooding took place. By the time the hurricane reached Haiti, most of the wind forces were reduced, but it produced heavy rainfalls;

(d) The direct losses were estimated to have a negative impact on the balance of payment of about US$ 43 million. This includes export losses and increased food imports, as well as material imports for the recovery phase;

(e) The Government of Haiti has established an inter-ministerial commission, headed by the Ministry of Planning, to coordinate the recovery activities. The commission has proposed a draft programme for rehabilitation and reconstruction amounting to US$ 42 million that correctly emphasizes agriculture and rural development.

C. Progress in the rehabilitation/ reconstruction phase

29. Several major donors, among which the World Bank, IADB, CIDA and the European Union have redirected part of their assistance programmes to meet some of the rehabilitation/reconstruction costs, in particular in the areas of rural infrastructure (rural roads and irrigation schemes), highway maintenance/repair and safety net provisions (including provision of agricultural inputs).

30. USAID, in particular through the PL 480 program (monetized food aid scheme), has provided, in addition to its regular aid programme, a very significant additional contribution. Most of the USAID-supported rehabilitation/reconstruction projects are implemented by non-governmental organizations.

31. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has provided a significant contribution of US$ 20 million as support to the balance of payment in the aftermath of hurricane Georges.

IV. Cuba

32. Cuba was struck by two consecutive disasters during 1998, namely:

(a) A prolonged drought related to the "El Niño" phenomenon, which particularly affected the eastern provinces of the country during the summer, at a moment when Cuban agriculture showed signs of a modest increase (at the end of 1995 and 1996);

(b) Hurricane Georges, which affected the Cuban territory from 22 to 26 September, severely hitting the same provinces. The tragic consequences of the hurricane as it struck the Caribbean basin are well known, although in the case of Cuba, owing to preventive measures adopted by the Government, only six dead were reported.

33. In terms of emergency relief and recovery/rehabilitation plans, the United Nations system in Cuba reacted to both emergencies in a coordinated manner. In July 1998, as a result of drought reports from the eastern provinces of Cuba, a joint World Food Programme (WFP), FAO, UNDP and UNICEF mission visited the area and issued a report on the prevailing conditions.

34. With the above-mentioned report as a supporting document, and in response to a request from the Cuban Government, the United Nations system, through the Geneva-based Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, launched an international appeal in July 1998.

35. In a reinforcement action, on 28 August 1998, WFP began an emergency operation valued at more than US$ 20 million, intended to compensate for the shortage of foodstuffs until the rehabilitation plans started to show results. The success of that operation still depends on the availability of resources and the pledges formulated by donor countries.

36. However, shortly after those activities were initiated, the passing of hurricane Georges complicated the situation and seriously aggravated the emergency. Together with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the in-country United Nations disaster management team, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs activated its tools for coordination of international response, as follows: (a) issuance of situation reports highlighting unmet emergency requirements in order to mobilize international assistance and summing up international response; (b) provision of a channel for cash contributions (US$ 329,000) for relief and immediate rehabilitation; and (c) facilitation of shipments of relief supplies and water-supply equipment.

37. Realizing that the problems generated by both disasters should be analysed against the economic crisis affecting the country, in October 1998, a joint assessment was undertaken by the Cuban Government, the United Nations disaster management team in Cuba and a mission from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. As a result, and after a demanding process, on 18 December 1998, a consolidated appeal from the United Nations was launched by the United Nations system in Havana (and disseminated through network of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs by fax and the Internet) in response to the double emergency situation created in Cuba. An information meeting was held by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP in Geneva on 26 February 1999 to present an update of the emergency situation and the appeal.

38. The comprehensive response of the international community, including donor countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, is

summarized in the table below. Some US$ 15 million have been mobilized out of the US$ 87 million of required support identified in the consolidated appeal. Around US$ 13 million have been used for emergency supplies and the remaining US$ 2 million have been allocated to recovery and rehabilitation programmes.

39. It is worth noting that:

(a) Emergency items are still needed in terms of food supply (special attention should be paid to the WFP appeal);

(b) Recent evidence confirms that the drought is again affecting the eastern provinces;

(c) In 1998, GDP only grew by 1.2 per cent, indicating that the rate of growth of the Cuban economy is still slowing down and therefore coincides with the trend indicated in the consolidated appeal.

Emergency situation in Cuba: Consolidated appeal from the United Nations; Actions to date

(as of 31 March 1999)

Organization Government	*Contribution*	*Amount (in United States dollars, unless otherwise indicated)*
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Deposits for drinking water	30 000
Japan	Filters and water deposits, soap, towels and medical supplies for hospitals and others (through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)	169 200
Japan	Food supply (through the assistance requested by WFP)	770 000
Japan	Bilateral assistance for the purchase of rice	8 600 000
Norway	Deposits for drinking water	29 100
Norway	Contribution for the hurricane victims	97 000
Spain	Food supply (through the assistance requested by WFP)	332 200
Switzerland	Food supply (through the assistance requested by WFP)	355 000
Luxembourg	Bilateral assistance for the purchase of foodstuffs	70 500
Italy	Additional support to the Programme of Human Development at the Local Level for prevention and rehabilitation (agriculture, housing, education, food, etc.)	1 000 000
Médecins sans Frontières	Water-purification tablets and others	80 000
Embassy of Canada	To be determined	50 000
Israel	Weed killers, irrigation equipment, vegetable seeds	-
Germany	To be determined (handed to the German Red Cross	71 400 (120 000 DM)
European Union	Rehabilitation of homes; sanitation and water systems	510 200

Organization Government	*Contribution*	*Amount (in United States dollars, unless otherwise indicated)*
WFP	Requested contribution of 34,000 tons of foodstuffs (rice, pulses, edible oil, canned fish, wheat) for 615,000 beneficiaries during nine months, to be delivered to schools, hospitals, infirmaries, centres for people with disabilities and maternity homes Total amount requested: 20,000,000	1 000 000
FAO	Project for the rehabilitation of agricultural and cattle production	400 000
UNICEF	Resources to improve and increase the availability of drinking water to vulnerable groups in Las Tunas and Holguin provinces	200 000
UNDP	Programme for the dissemination of crops (rice, beans, corn and sunflower) Total amount: 1,800,000	600 000
UNDP	Communication system for emergency situations	40 000
UNDP	Logistical support to water distribution	60 000
Sweden	Contribution to the UNDP programme for extension of crops	500 000 (4 000 000 SCR)
Total		**14 964 600**

Notes

[1] Information sources for this section are CDERA, USAID and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs situation reports for 1998 and 1999.

[2] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Dominican Republic — Evaluation of the damages caused by hurricane Georges, 1998.